

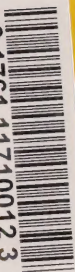
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## WOMEN AND WORK:

### THE SECOND TIME AROUND: A STUDY OF WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORK FORCE

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	<u>Page</u>
a) Job Placement	42
i. Canada Employment Centres	42
ii. Outreach Program	43
b) Occupational Training	45
i. Institutional Training	45
ii. Industrial Training	49
c) Job Creation	50
VI. <u>TOWARDS A GREATER RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S CHANGING ECONOMIC ROLE</u>	53
1. CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL WORK PATTERNS	54
2. SHARING HOUSEKEEPING AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES	55
3. CONCLUSION	57
VII. <u>REFERENCES</u>	59
VIII. <u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	65

## THE SECOND TIME AROUND

### A Study of Women Returning to the Work Force

#### I.

#### INTRODUCTION

Scarcely a month goes by without a new spate of articles in the popular magazines on women going back to work; titles such as "Re-Entry Ripoff", "Working Mum" and "Are You Afraid to Go Back to Work" abound. The slant of these articles varies as does the mood: one article effuses breathlessly about the joys of returning to paid employment while a second bemoans the often long and demoralizing search it entails, complete with employers' rebuffs and bruised egos. A reader who compares articles might wonder if the authors are discussing the same subject, so varied are the approaches.

And yet these articles do describe the same experience - an experience which is common to thousands of Canadian women. It is the return to the paid work force after many years during which their primary role was homemaker, wife and mother. And no matter how diverse their impressions about job hunting, family responsibilities or skills upgrading, these women have one challenge in common, and that is coping with the transition from full-time housewifery to paid employment. This transition involves a blending of traditional roles of wife, mother, homemaker with an equally real, but unfamiliar, role of wage earner and work force member. The transition may be exhilarating to one woman and terrifying to another, but it is rarely simple or straightforward for anyone.

The purpose of this paper will be to study the growing number of Canadian women who are returning to the work force after an extended interruption from paid employment in order to marry and raise a family. It will attempt

to describe the motivations of re-entry women and the problems they face in meeting the work world; this paper will also suggest measures to assist women in their re-entry to the paid labour force.

Little research has been done in this area; there is no national study on re-entry women and only a handful of Canadian studies and articles which outline specific projects. This paper must suffice therefore as a preliminary study, raising more questions than it answers.



## II.

### WHO ARE THE RE-ENTRY WOMEN?

#### 1. PROFILES FROM CANADIAN STUDIES

The image of the Canadian woman as wife, mother and homemaker still prevails today, although almost one-half of the adult female population is in the work force, the majority being married women.<sup>1</sup>

While the ever-tardy conventional wisdom still has it that a woman will marry at an early age and then stay home to raise a family, the reality is that almost 50 per cent of women in the 25-34 years age bracket - that is, those women in their prime child-bearing and child-raising years - will remain in the work force even though they marry. Further, the labour force participation rate actually increases to over 50 per cent for married women in the 35-44 years age bracket.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in Canada as in many other countries, legions of married women re-enter the work force at about age 35. In fact, a labour force work pattern involving two stages exists for many married women: the first before marriage and child-bearing and the second after child-bearing when the woman re-enters the work force. This second stage commences typically when the woman is about 35 years of age; her children are a bit older and no longer need close supervision so she can take on the extra responsibility of a job. The re-entry woman often returns to work with a firm commitment that will carry her through 20 to 30 more years of working life.

Three Canadian studies furnish information about who re-entry women are.

A study<sup>3</sup> from the Quebec Ministry of Labour and Manpower (henceforth referred to as the Quebec study) reported on the findings of a questionnaire survey which had been sent to 1,113 women, all of whom had recently taken an occupational skills or professional development course. At the time the questionnaire was answered, the great majority of respondents were in the labour force. A profile of the typical respondent shows a woman 40 years of age, married, with three children, the youngest child being 10 years of age. She works full-time, most often in some type of office support job or possibly as a nurse, waitress or seamstress; she earns an average salary of \$176 a week (about \$9,152 per year). Her husband is described as a blue collar worker earning about \$240 per week (about \$12,480 a year).

The Women's Bureau of the Ontario Department of Labour compiled information from interviews of 300 clients who sought career information and guidance at the Women's Bureau Career Centre in Toronto. None of these women were working at the time of interviewing. The findings of the report,<sup>4</sup> henceforth called the Ontario report, mirror the findings of the Quebec study in all respects except for the occupation and salary of the respondents' husbands. This discrepancy is probably largely the result of differences in job opportunities between Quebec and Toronto. The typical Careers Centre client is of Canadian origin, 41 years old and married. She has three children who are just reaching high school age, the youngest one almost 10 and the eldest 16. Her husband is a professional, better educated than she is, and earns between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year.

A University of Calgary study<sup>5</sup> interviewed 247 female Calgarians over the age of 35 about a variety of experiences and attitudes related to employment. The nucleus of partici-



pants was chosen from those who had registered at the local Canada Manpower Centre at any time during a 12-month period ending one year before the interviews commenced; at the time of the interview some respondents had joined the work force, some had not.

The University of Calgary study offers a picture of re-entry women similar to the two already described above. The women in the sample ranged from 35 years of age to over 60 and were of Canadian origin; the majority were married with two children between the ages of 6 and 18. Husbands were described as having a median income of about \$14,000 a year.

These findings alone do not sufficiently emphasize the financial hardship which frequently motivates the re-entry woman. Counsellors, employers and researchers informally interviewed for the present study consistently stated that financial necessity was most frequently the motivator for women returning to work. In 1975 (the year of the Calgary study) the average income of families was \$16,613. With an income of about \$14,000 a family falls in the bottom two-fifths of all families with respect to income.<sup>6</sup>

Also, the above profiles of typical re-entry women make no mention of the sole-support mother who must raise her family alone. The average family income for families headed by a woman in the labour force, estimated for 1976, was \$11,729.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. THE CHANGING ECONOMIC ROLE OF WOMEN

The re-entry of mature women into the labour force is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a complex of social and economic forces that have significantly changed the Canadian family and hence the work patterns of many Canadian women. Canadian women have always worked to provide for themselves and their families and to share the responsibility for satisfying the family's economic needs. The nature of their work has altered considerably, however.

In the agricultural and rural setting of frontier Canada, women worked in the home and on the farm along with their husbands and children in order to produce the necessary goods for survival. The traditional family, working as a single production unit, was characterized by a more or less rigid division of duties but with all contributors performing services essential to economic survival.

Until World War II, little change occurred in the working pattern set by earlier generations of Canadian women. Although the transformation from an agrarian and primary resources society to an industrial economy was well underway by the early 1900s, the continued expectation of the division of labour within the family was such that the married woman continued to specialize in home activities even while her husband shifted from the field to the factory.

During those same years, a number of social and economic developments occurred which influenced the gradual change in women's economic role. Most significant perhaps was the advent of birth control methods, which have greatly facilitated the spacing and limiting of births. The increase in women's life expectancy has extended the span of years during which a woman could engage in activities other than

child-bearing and rearing. Access to higher education and expanding job opportunities afforded by urbanization and industrialization also contributed to women's entry into the labour market.

Labour shortages during World War II drew many women, married as well as single, into paid employment for the first time. Though relatively high wages made women reluctant to return to domestic duties after the war, government and industry then discouraged married women from working. In fact it was not until 1955 that restrictions were removed on the employment and promotion of married women working in the federal public service.<sup>8</sup>

In the years since the war, the rapid expansion of the service sector has created a demand for women to fill a number of white collar and service jobs. Those responding to these multiplying employment opportunities have been married women in their middle years returning to work after a lessening of family responsibilities and younger generations of married women who are combining family life with an uninterrupted work career. In the case of the latter group, lowered fertility rates, increased childlessness and greater acceptance of day care have contributed to their permanent and uninterrupted attachment to the work force. For all age groups, the financial pressures of continued inflation have meant that fewer and fewer households can afford the luxury of a full-time homemaker. Today, almost one married woman in two (46.3 per cent) works outside the home.<sup>9</sup>

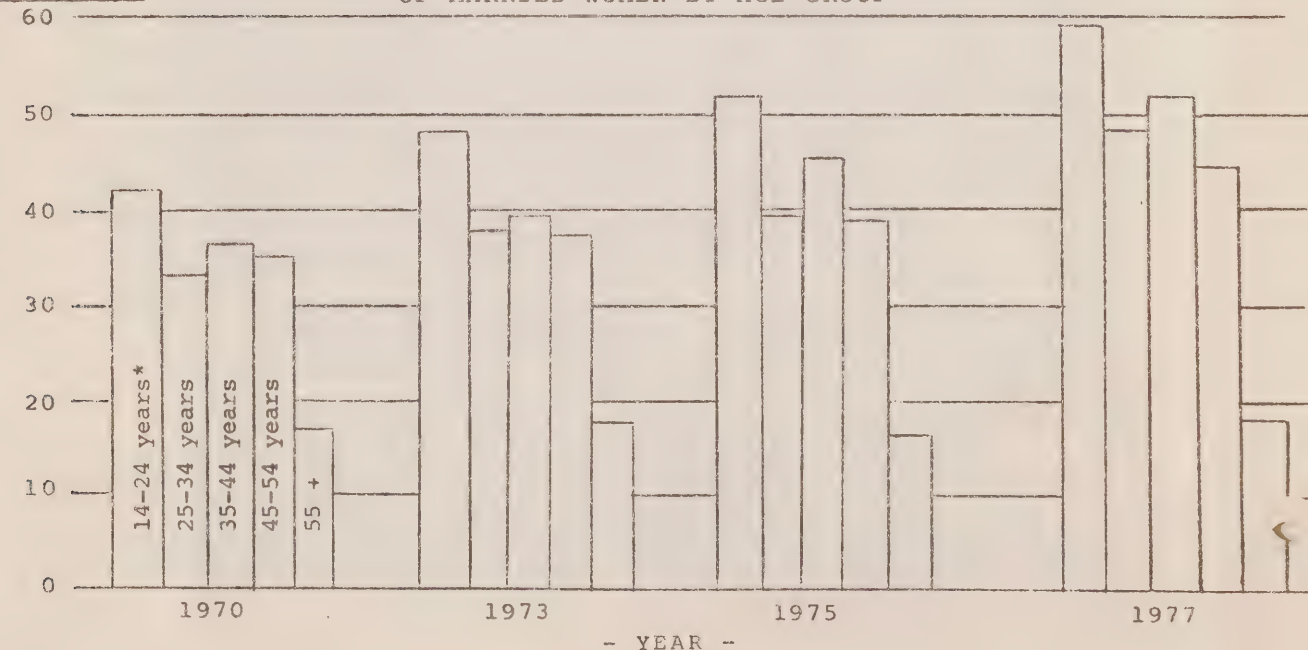
International studies show that the labour force re-entry of mature married women is a world-wide phenomenon. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) undertook an extensive inquiry into re-entry women,<sup>10</sup>



covering the related problems and policies of nine countries: Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. In all these countries paid work is an important element in older women's lives and they are making a substantial contribution to the economy. In the United States the participation rate of women in the second working phase actually exceeds that of the younger group of women (those in the first working phase before marriage and child-bearing).

Figure 1 depicts the rapid growth in recent years of labour force participation of Canadian married women in all age categories; the growth in participation of middle-aged and upper middle-aged women is remarkable. The age group 35-44 years participates at a higher rate than the 25-34 years group, the prime child-bearing and child-raising years; also labour force participation of married women between 45 and 54 years of age remains high, indicating that the second phase of working life is often sustained for 20 years or more.

FIGURE 1  
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES  
OF MARRIED WOMEN BY AGE GROUP<sup>11</sup>



\* Note: for 1977 the age category is 15-24 years.

### III.

#### MAJOR REASONS WHY WOMEN RE-ENTER THE WORK FORCE

##### 1. FINANCIAL NECESSITY

###### a) Sharing the Responsibility

Many married women resume paid employment in order to share the financial responsibility of supporting a family. Inflation has made two incomes essential for many families in order to maintain economic stability and to provide for future financial security, for example through pensions. That economic necessity is a compelling force behind married women's participation in the labour force is illustrated in the table below.

TABLE 1  
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES  
OF MARRIED WOMEN, HUSBAND PRESENT, BY FAMILY INCOME  
LESS OWN WAGE, CANADA 1975 (%)<sup>12</sup>

Family income less own wage	- AGE -				
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	15-64
\$3,999 or less	66	60	47	34	49
\$4000 - \$7,999	59	53	48	27	44
\$8000 - \$11,999	62	58	51	33	51
\$12,000-\$15,999	53	51	54	40	49
\$16,000-\$19,999	54	48	55	42	49
\$20,000 or more	30	37	42	33	37

Table 1 shows that, according to the most recent data available, almost one-half of married women whose family income was less than \$4000 exclusive of the woman's wage participated in the labour force. Since family income is

generally used as a measure of poverty, the table suggests that many low-income families may be beyond the poverty line only because both husband and wife are paid workers.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, these women are breadwinners and the financial stability of their families depends in part on their salaries.

Table 1 also illustrates that female participation is sustained until family incomes reach fairly high levels, thus suggesting that economic pressures for married women to undertake paid employment continue into higher income categories. In short, many married women must work in order that their families maintain a reasonable standard of living.

A re-entry pattern is clear in the table above for middle and higher income categories (\$12,000 and above): women aged 35-44 years were participating at a higher rate than women aged 25-34 years (i.e. women with young children). In addition, the participation rate remained high for the 46-64 years age group in these same categories.

There was agreement among counsellors and teachers interviewed that married women from the middle and higher income groups who are contemplating a return to work will rarely admit openly that their husbands' incomes are inadequate. It may be that such an admission would be seen as a poor reflection on the husband. Sometimes after a prolonged conversation such a re-entry woman will concede that the business isn't going so well after all, or her husband's paycheque no longer stretches as far as it used to.

#### b) All the Responsibility

Diehards who believe that women work for pin money may be surprised to hear that almost forty per cent<sup>14</sup> of all working women are single, divorced, separated or widowed



and therefore must work to support themselves and their families. These women are working to furnish themselves and their families with the necessities of life; all too often "frills" are out of the question.

The sole support mother is a case in point. Close to 7.5% of all families in Canada are single-parent families, and most of them are headed by women. There were 373,000 single-parent families headed by women in 1976; their average income was \$9,001. Families headed by a woman in the labour force fared slightly better; their average income in 1976 was \$11,729. The average family income for families headed by men in the labour force was \$21,459.<sup>15</sup>

The large number of single-parent families headed by women may be attributed to the increasingly high divorce rates. Over 40% of divorced women are 35 years of age or older at the time of divorce,<sup>16</sup> and statistics indicate that the great majority of them will return to the labour market. Almost three-quarters (70.5%) of divorced or separated women aged 35-44 years are in the labour force, while 47.8% of divorced or separated women aged 45 and over are in the labour force.<sup>17</sup>

The reasons for this situation are not hard to find. For many women, the dissolution of the marriage also means the loss of their only source of income, and further, an income loss which is not likely to be recouped. Although the court may award the woman maintenance for herself and her children, the federal Law Reform Commission<sup>18</sup> has stated that one of the most serious problems facing a divorced spouse is the inability to enforce an existing maintenance order.

Widows constitute a second group of working women who must work to support themselves and in some cases their children. As widowhood may have come suddenly and unexpectedly, these women are especially ill-prepared for this task. At a time in their lives when they may have been looking toward their husbands' retirement, thoughts of their own re-entry into the labour force may have seemed far-fetched. It should not be surprising, therefore, that when the financial crisis that too often accompanies widowhood forces them back into the labour market, these women have low and outdated work skills, little notion of how to go about looking for a job, and not much hope of finding one which will provide an adequate income.

A recent report<sup>19</sup> of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has documented that widows make up one of the most destitute classes of citizens in Canada. Statistics show that more than half of all married women aged 55 to 64 have no personal income at all and no means of support when their husbands die. All too often the deceased husband's pension provides little or no relief. The Canada Pension Plan provides a widow's pension but the current maximum payment to widows aged 45 to 65 years is \$1,453 per year. (The Quebec Pension Plan pays a maximum of \$2,358 per year to this age group.) Very few widows get the maximum C.P.P. benefit, some get none at all.

Private pension plans, which are generally believed to be the backbone of Canada's pension system, perform even more poorly. They cover only about 40% of all salaried workers, and these largely from the higher income groups. The worst is yet to come, as author Louise Dulude points out in this paper: "Of all employees who take part in a private pension plan, 52% belong to plans that provide no

pension to a widow whose husband dies before retirement, while 58% are in plans that will not pay survivors' pensions if the pensioner-husband dies after retirement."<sup>20</sup>

More research and study is needed to determine how widows can be better protected and provided for under private pension plans. In addition, lowering the age of eligibility for income-tested old age security and guaranteed income supplement payments and increasing the Canada Pension Plan payments to widows would be steps toward assisting widows in dire financial straits.

## 2. DECLINING STATUS AS A HOMEMAKER

In the change from an agrarian society to an industrialized economy, the focus of the workplace moved away from the home. The economic survival of many families then came to depend on the paid work of the husband rather than the joint efforts of all family members. "Work" was defined as paid work, and the status of the full-time housewife, economically dependent on someone else's paid work, deteriorated. Thus, the low status of her occupation provides a significant impetus for the homemaker to return to work.

The desire for tangible rewards and personal growth outside the home may become stronger as children grow older and family responsibilities decline. Once young children have begun attending school many women find their homemaking roles considerably reduced both in content and the time required to perform them. With fewer hours required to be



spent on child care, meal preparation, housecleaning and the like, many women feel that, for the first time in many years, they are free to commit themselves to work outside the home. The homemaking role may be further reduced when children become teenagers and are essentially on their own. Often this reduction in a woman's homemaking role coincides with those years when her husband's job or career is the most demanding and fulfilling. Many women may then seek a second career outside the home.

Well-educated women, who have greater earnings potential and a relatively wider range of jobs for which they can be hired, are particularly likely to re-enter the labour force at this point. A well-educated woman may tend to view employment as highly rewarding, combining responsibility, high prestige and pay and mastery over the work environment. Furthermore, there may be social pressure not to "waste" her skills.

In addition, the decline in the demands of homemaking may provide the first opportunity for a woman to establish her financial independence and to take action against her economic vulnerability in the event of divorce or the death of her husband.

#### IV.

#### EMPLOYABILITY

##### 1. EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Totally untypical of the army of women returning to work is the professionally qualified woman who knows where she can fit into the labour market. Through good luck or good planning she received a sound education or training in her youth which has helped prepare her for employment; she may have kept in touch with her profession on an intermittent or part-time basis or may know what refresher training is required. Provided employment opportunities in her field have not "dried up", as is recently the case with returning nurses and teachers, the professional woman can fit into the work force more easily than other women.

For the vast majority of women, however, the situation is quite different. They have had no specific training. With a gap of ten to twenty years their knowledge of the labour market, always sketchy, may now be both limited and inaccurate. Their views are highly coloured by the jobs they knew a decade ago.

Few women are prepared for the realization that raising a family is not a lifelong occupation and that after their children enter school they will have several decades to fill productively. This lack of planning is reflected in the occupational categories which they choose. For example, in 1978<sup>21</sup> over a third (34.7 per cent) of all working women were in clerical occupations; 18.0 per cent of working women were in service occupations; in short, over one-half of the female working force were in clerical and service jobs.

Of course there are women in professional categories, predominantly teaching and nursing; in 1978 6.3 per cent of working women were in teaching and 8.9 per cent were in medicine and health.

Few clerical and service jobs are conducive to career advancement to more challenging or better paid jobs. They invariably command low salaries. They are often extensions of women's social mandate of nurturer and helpmate to others and are chosen because of their complementarity with wife and mother roles and responsibilities.

Not surprisingly, most re-entry women possess traditional "women's" job skills. The Ontario study<sup>22</sup> reported that about 59 per cent of their sample had held jobs that could be classified as "clerical and sales". Professional and semi-professional occupations formed the second largest category, accounting for 29 per cent of the total; this category included teachers, nurses, welfare workers, dietitians, and librarians. Technical occupations such as laboratory technician, chemical analyst, research assistant and repair service representative were reported by only about 10 per cent of the women.

Respondents in the Quebec study<sup>23</sup> were also highly represented in the traditional female occupations. Thirty-seven per cent were currently in clerical occupations, 22 per cent were classed in professional, technical or administrative work, 15 per cent in service occupations and 14 per cent were blue collar workers.

The University of Calgary study<sup>24</sup> reported the present employment of its sample of women aged 35 years and over who had just recently re-entered the work force. Office work



accounted for the highest proportion of full-time employees and was reported by 41 per cent of the sample of full-time employed re-entry women. The incidence of office workers was particularly high in the 35 to 40 age group. 17.3 per cent of the full-time employed sample reported a professional occupation, mainly teaching or nursing, with the nurses most apt to work part-time. Sales was reported by 14.7 per cent of the full-time employed sample as their present occupation and was especially frequent in the 40 to 45 and 55 to 60 age groups.

No information was found on how many re-entry professional women are under-employed and work at jobs which are below their capabilities. For example, nurses and teachers who have been out of the work force for an extended period find it hard to compete with younger workers, particularly as the demand for both of these occupations has decreased.

It is probable that large numbers of re-entry women from all occupations work below their ability. All the so-called objective measuring sticks used by employers - recent work experience, work history, references - tend to record the re-entry woman's weakest points and ignore her strengths. Past employment history may document job experience from 20 years ago which was at a low scale and reflected the weaker work commitment of a younger person; past training may be below the level the woman is now capable of operating at, may be totally irrelevant or poorly documented.

Intermittent or part-time work experience gained during those years when family responsibilities were the heaviest may also suggest a work capability much below what the woman possesses. For example, a woman with a business

degree may have taken temporary work as a filing clerk when the children were young; if she currently hopes to find a management position her recent work experience would be of little interest to prospective employers except that it might mislead them into underestimating her ability or her capacity for responsibility. In addition, there is the chronic problem of employers underestimating the value of experience gained through volunteer work.

Clearly women themselves are going to have to do some hard-nosed and systematic planning if they realistically expect interesting and well-paying jobs when they return to the work force. The burden of solving their employment problems should not be left to them alone, however; enlightened hiring policies along with career counselling are essential to facilitate re-entry to the work force.

## 2. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The University of Calgary study<sup>25</sup> reported that one-half of the study sample had completed at least grade 12 education. Forty per cent of all respondents of the Quebec survey<sup>26</sup> had completed 12 to 15 years of schooling; 5 per cent had a university degree. Of the Ontario sample,<sup>27</sup> just over a quarter were university graduates and a third had experienced some form of university education. Of those who went to university, the majority had been traditional in their selection of courses, pursuing a general arts degree. Most of those who had not gone to university had taken general high school courses; of these, almost two-thirds had taken at least some commercial training, either with or immediately following their high school education.

Further, the women had not chosen education that was vocationally oriented except for the traditional fields of nursing, teaching and secretarial science. They had not taken subjects which would qualify them for responsible positions in traditionally "male" occupations and had not re-trained themselves in new occupations such as data processing which have since opened up.

A recent study<sup>28</sup> of Vancouver women returning to work or school discussed attitudes which had affected education and career choices made as girls and young women. When the women described how they had arrived at their original career choices, the most striking aspect was lack of specific encouragement or discouragement in any particular direction. Very little guidance was offered but when advice was given, nursing, teaching and secretarial work were held out as options for women. While encouragement was given to do well in school, they were not as uniformly encouraged to go to university or were actively discouraged. Any aspirations toward a non-traditional career were actively discouraged. The author concluded that specific discouragements stood out against a background of lack of specific encouragements.

Certainly a greater awareness is needed in the educational system that many young women will eventually have to work to support themselves and their families. Non-sexist vocational information programs are essential before girls and boys can make unbiased and informed occupational choices. In the meantime working women will continue to shore up their weak employment skills through late educational and occupational choices and through continuing education programs and skills training. This process will be discussed further in Section V, "Steps in the Re-Entry Process".



### 3. ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS TO RE-ENTRY

A survey of the literature on working mothers and re-entry indicates that in addition to coping with practical problems like allocating household chores to family members or scheduling weekly duties around a retraining course, the re-entry woman may find that her opportunities for employment are hampered by attitudes and opinions of employers or by her own view of her work roles.

It may be useful therefore to examine certain frequently-expressed attitudes regarding the employment of re-entry women which, where held, are likely to have an adverse effect on a woman's employment prospects.

#### a) Employers' Attitudes

It is ironic that the very role of homemaker, that society has lauded and urged women to stay in for all our sakes, becomes a stigma once a woman steps into the labour market. Prospective employers are generally not aware of the skills and talents required to be a successful homemaker; also they are apt to have the bias of most members of our society that "work" is defined as paid work, and hence the required route to developing marketable skills. Similarly, descriptions of volunteer experience may get only a peremptory hearing.

Most employers seem to believe that a married woman is apt to be an unreliable employee as family responsibilities lead to high absenteeism and turnover rates. It is often stated that married women avoid taking responsibility. Given this view, employers conclude that re-entry women should only be employed where no other labour is available,

will not waste time and money training them for skilled or responsible work and will not consider them for promotion.

With regard to the alleged unreliability of female workers, studies in a number of countries show that both absenteeism and turnover rates among men as well as women are higher among unskilled workers than among those in skilled or responsible positions.<sup>29</sup> As women are to be found mainly among the unskilled, their reputation for high absence and instability may be a function of their job level. Age is a variable that needs to be examined separately, as studies indicate that older women employees have a higher stability rate than young women workers.<sup>30</sup>

While some employers may believe that women are poor promotion bets and cite cases where women have not wanted promotion, it must be said that there are many other instances where women wanted promotion, carried it successfully and gave long years of service. The point that emerges most clearly is the extent to which opportunities for individual women, and the benefits employers could gain from the promotion of appropriate women, are handicapped by generalizations about women workers as a group.

The assumption that a married woman is by definition a secondary worker proves a hardy perennial that has been particularly hard to eradicate in spite of extensive evidence showing that the majority of women work out of economic necessity. In fact, an even more serious extension of this assumption has been heard in these recent times of high unemployment, the suggestion that men ought to have priority over women in filling the available jobs. If jobs are to be allocated on the basis of economic necessity, then surely that criterion should be used for both women and men rather

than resorting to the incorrect generalization that men alone bear the economic responsibilities of a family.

Finally, a mixture of sex and age discrimination may lead employers to look for qualities in female employees that have no bearing on the job per se. One such prejudice is that women should be young and pretty for positions such as airline attendant or receptionist.

The University of Calgary study<sup>31</sup> is, to the knowledge of the author, the only Canadian study to attempt to analyze sex and age discrimination against re-entry women workers. Although only a few women in the sample reported personal experience of prejudice, they did report prejudice on the basis of age more frequently than sex prejudice. With respect to obtaining a job, some 15 per cent of the female sample had encountered prejudice and this reached 26 per cent among full-time employees over the age of 40. In the area of promotion, sex prejudice dominated but still only reached 7 per cent. As Schonfield pointed out, this figure may well be an underestimate as most of the women were employed in sex-linked jobs and their competition for promotion was usually against women rather than men.

It is interesting to note that the feeling that prejudice existed was much more prevalent among a sample of employers, personnel officers, union officials and counsellors who were interviewed. Seventy-five per cent of the union officials and counsellors thought that women over 35 did experience prejudice in obtaining a job and 50 per cent of the employers agreed. Problems in obtaining a promotion were considered to be more likely a bias against sex than age. In the opportunity for training, prejudice against sex was considered almost as high as prejudice against age.



## b) Re-entry Women's Attitudes

Re-entry women frequently possess conflicting and ambivalent attitudes which hinder them in pursuing a job or continued education. For the purposes of this paper, these attitudes will be discussed under the headings Self, Family and Work.

### i. Self

Lack of self-confidence is perhaps the most fundamental and pervasive attitude which hampers re-entry women in attaining their goals. That re-entry women feel unsure of themselves is not surprising given that they are on new or unfamiliar ground: most lack recent work experience or training as well as satisfactory information about the job market, and the years at home may not have permitted a woman to form an objective view of her capabilities. In addition, as already discussed, employers may not seriously assess the skills required to be a full-time homemaker.

A woman's return to the job market is often associated with a period of great change in her life - a divorce, her husband loses his job, the children are leaving home - all of which could contribute to a temporary loss of self-confidence.

Increasing age can present direct or indirect barriers. Current psychology theory<sup>32</sup> maintains that many adults will in their middle years undergo a full-fledged authenticity crisis when changes in midlife, such as the faltering of physical powers or the fading purpose of stereotyped roles, force upon each individual a change in time sense; all notions about the future are rebalanced around the idea of time left to live. To the woman who has remained at home, a characteristic of this midlife passage may be the feeling that existing life structures are too confining, and result in a search for

new commitments outside the home. The turmoil which accompanies such a search may be manifested in re-entry women by self-doubt about abilities to learn new skills or to keep pace, or a distrust of one's own stamina.

Increasing age can indirectly affect a woman's chances of achieving her goals by encouraging a short-term approach. For instance, the Ontario study noted that age was consciously or unconsciously taken into account as women calculated the amount of time they could reasonably devote to education. Younger women, under 40, generally made plans for longer-term training and careful investigation of the work field. Those over 40 tended to be in more of a hurry. They were more likely to want immediate short-term training and more likely, as a result, to compromise their goals. Women over 50, even those who had indicated a willingness to take training, were reported to be more likely to enter directly into employment with little or no preparation or to give up entirely.

#### ii. Work

Lack of sufficient realism about the work world may present an obstacle to many re-entry women; like lack of self-confidence, it is most often rooted in inexperience and an absence of reliable information. The Ontario study reported on re-entry women's lack of sufficient realism and noted that it may take two forms:

Clients tended to overestimate 1) the work hours, salary and level of responsibility that they were qualified to command; 2) the kinds of educational programs they would be able to enter; 3) the employer's ability to recognize undemonstrated "latent" abilities; and 4) the value of work

as an entertainment or universal problem-solver. They tended to underestimate 1) the amount of training or re-training they would need in order to reach their goals; 2) the total amount of financial outlay that most training would require - for example, housekeeping costs, transportation costs, tuition and other expenses; and 3) the importance of health, stamina and good grooming.

In addition, a few women had been underrating their own qualifications by applying for work at a very low level. Their efforts to find employment had been thwarted by the employer's judgement that they would not be satisfied by the work and would not stay in it for long.

Older women were found in all of the above categories more often than younger women.

The main source of lack of realism was the absence of accurate and adequate knowledge of labour market conditions. Almost without exception the clients' visit to the career centre was their first attempt to find information from an official source. They had been building their hopes on haphazard impressions. The study reports that the great majority of clients adjusted themselves when given appropriate information.

The findings from the Ontario study argue for a concerted effort on the part of government and educational institutions to offer counselling and orientation programs geared to the mature worker or student.

### iii. Family

Deep-rooted conflict may be at the base of a re-entry woman's attitudes toward family and seeking employment.



As a homemaker for many years, she has been socialized to take primary responsibility for the emotional and psychological well-being of her family and may believe that this well-being depends on her unconditional availability to them; conflict may then arise between the woman's desire for continuing the nurturing role and her need for personal growth outside of the family structure.

This conflict was clearly evident in the Quebec sample of re-entry women. When asked to weigh difficulties met when returning to work, reconciliation of family and work roles was most frequently mentioned; over a third (34.6 per cent) considered it a problem.<sup>33</sup>

The Ontario study<sup>34</sup> provides a specific example of such conflict; although many clients claimed to want employment in order to allay their fears of usefulness in the home or to take advantage of increasing freedom, roughly 75 per cent of these same clients mentioned that remaining family duties could be expected to interfere with ideal education or work plans. Often a part-time job may be chosen in order to suit the family schedule in spite of the offer of a better full-time job.

The study<sup>35</sup> of Vancouver women returning to work or school underlines how family support or disapproval can affect a woman's ability to successfully formulate and carry out education and career plans. Kimball reported that those women who were definite and focussed in their plans either had very supportive husbands or were in marriages that they felt were in danger of splitting up. In this latter group the realization that the marriage was very bad was motivating the women to gain some marketable skills or to look for paying work immediately.

The definite group also got more active support from friends, teenage children or a counsellor than did those women who were indefinite about their career and education plans.

While the indefinite group did sometimes say that they had supportive husbands, this support tended to be qualified or passive. For example, support was conditional upon no change in the performance of family duties or was of the "Do what you want" sort.

#### 4. CHILD CARE - A PRACTICAL BARRIER TO RE-ENTRY

The re-entry woman not only requires family support, she also requires community support in the form of flexible and affordable child care. However, child care services in Canada today are far from adequate.

As of March 31, 1978, there were 209,000 children under 2 years of age whose mothers worked, yet only 5.73% or 11,976 were placed in government-licensed daycare centres. There were 486,000 children from 2 to 6 years of age whose mothers worked, but only 12% or 58,320 of these children were in government-licensed daycare centres. Of the 2,236,000 latchkey children - those children from 6 to 16 with working mothers - only .39%, less than one-half a per cent, were enrolled in licensed after-school or lunchtime daycare.<sup>36</sup>

The shortage of government-licensed child care facilities forces most mothers to make private child care arrangements. As a result "for the vast majority of children whose mothers are in the labour force, care is custodial rather than instructive in nature".<sup>37</sup>

The difficulty of finding convenient high-quality child care at a reasonable cost only increases the re-entry woman's conflict between her desire to seek employment and her attitudes toward her family. As a result her difficulty in adapting to her new dual role is increased.



V,

STEPS IN THE RE-ENTRY PROCESS

1. VOLUNTEER WORK

Volunteer work is often perceived by homemakers as a first step in the process of leaving full-time housewifery. Old skills can be dusted off, new ones learned, contacts can be made - all in an atmosphere less preoccupied with performance standards and pressure than that, say, of a profit-making company. The acquired volunteer work experience will then be accepted by a prospective employer as a rough equivalent to recent paid work experience.

Unfortunately, many women who are planning to re-enter the work force and are counting on volunteer work as a lever to a job may be building their career plans on a faulty foundation. While much lip service is paid to praising the volunteer for service to her community, there is little concrete evidence that employers view volunteers as a source of valuable paid employees.

Ironically, volunteers themselves may discount their work and be unaware of the considerable economic contribution their services make to their community and of the skills required to perform their tasks. The familiar phrase "just a volunteer" reveals the generally self-depreciating attitude of volunteers and is not likely to inspire enthusiasm in any personnel officer.

Feminist writer Doris B. Gold has discussed voluntarism in the context of a subtle and complex blend of society's views of unpaid work and women's roles.<sup>38</sup> Gold has called voluntarism "...one of the oldest, most subtle, most complicated ways in which women have been disengaged from the

economy with their own eager cooperation". She contends that powerful social disapproval coupled with women's own psychological conditioning of self-negation and ambivalence about self-realization compels women to regard themselves as marginal jobholders except in times of family crisis or poverty. Hence women have turned to voluntarism and created an impressive network of service systems. Within these systems, however, they often perform the same roles of mothering and maintenance that they carry out within the home; these nurturing roles rarely include policy making and are generally not geared toward advancement to top positions.

If our society is in fact exploiting volunteers, what is it getting from them? A very great deal, one must conclude from two Canadian reports on voluntarism. A report of the Canadian Council on Social Development states, "Our human service system could not function without the essential services provided by volunteers."<sup>39</sup>

A recent Canadian study<sup>40</sup> estimated the dollar value of volunteer work to Canadian society by studying the "market replacement cost" of this work - i.e., what it would cost to replace the performed services with equivalent labour hired at a current market rate. A conservative estimate of the total value of volunteer services in Canada for 1971 cited in the study was about \$1,045 million, or about 1.1% of Canada's \$93,307 million GNP in that year.

Volunteers would be well advised to press for measures which officially recognize their work and to insist that they be served by the communities and institutions that they themselves serve. Some steps have already been taken in this regard: as a result of a recommendation<sup>41</sup>

of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (R.C.S.W.), the federal Public Service Commission now states clearly on its applications for employment that volunteer experience can be included as previous working experience. This recommendation came as a result of briefs to the R.C.S.W. which repeatedly urged the recognition of volunteer work as work experience for employment purposes. More recently, the National Advisory Council on Voluntary Action and the Canadian Council on Social Development have both urged employers to recognize volunteer experience in assessing a job candidate's qualifications.

Attitudes are slow to change. For example, although the principle of accepting volunteer experience has been effectively accepted by the Public Service Commission, an underlying attitude seems to persist that volunteer experience does not contribute to the development of highly skilled work capability.

Being aware of the pitfalls of relying too heavily on volunteer work to pave the way to a full-time job, a woman who chooses volunteer work might be counselled to specialize in one social service area. Also she should actively seek opportunities to develop management and organizational skills within the volunteer framework.

## 2. CONTINUING EDUCATION

The overall growth of continuing education has not been well documented, but the table below suggests that there has been at least a threefold increase in the number of adults enrolled from 1959-60 to 1972-73. As far as one can tell, female enrolment has been a major part of



the total, but the data are too incomplete to permit extensive comment on trends in female registration.

TABLE 2  
ESTIMATED STUDENT ENROLMENT  
IN SCHOOL BOARD CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS, CANADA,  
SELECTED YEARS (THOUSANDS OF PERSONS)<sup>42</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Part-time Credit Programs</u>			<u>Formal Non-Credit General Interest Programs</u>		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
1959-60	n.a.	n.a.	25	n.a.	n.a.	100
1964-65	n.a.	n.a.	55	n.a.	n.a.	127
1969-70	101	75	176	77	197	274
1970-71	123	103	226	61	181	242
1971-72	95	104	199	70	206	276
1972-73	n.a.	n.a.	133	n.a.	n.a.	366

n.a. - not available.

It is also not clear if women are beginning to take more credit, job-oriented courses. The table above clearly indicates that more men took credit courses than non-credit, while the reverse was true for women. The University of Calgary study indicated a high degree of interest among re-entry women in some form of continuing education; almost 70 per cent of the sample had taken some form of continuing education, the overwhelming majority being enrolled in job-oriented courses (see Table 3, next page).

TABLE 3  
TYPES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ENROLMENT  
OF UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY SAMPLE (%)<sup>43</sup>

Business	29.1	Education	9.3
Technical	2.4	Gen. Interest	2.0
University	6.1	Other	8.1
Nursing	11.3	None	31.6

Similarly, the Ontario study<sup>44</sup> reported almost half of the sample (43 per cent) had taken part in continuing education and that most of these had shown a vocational orientation. Eighteen per cent of those who had taken some continuing education had taken only "personal interest" courses. The remaining 82 per cent were evenly divided between those who had chosen training for office work (mostly typing, but also bookkeeping, accountancy practice and stenography) and those who had taken other vocational courses such as commercial art, social welfare or journalism.

The discrepancy in findings between Table 2 and the two re-entry studies might lead one to conclude that the re-entry groups are informed and directed women who know what courses or training they need to improve their employment skills and are actively engaged in attaining them. The high degree of involvement in vocational courses could be seen as a gearing up for return to the work force. To some extent this is no doubt true, but comments from the Ontario study suggest that there is not great cause for optimism:

Despite the large number who had engaged in education which provided potentially useful skills, there was little evidence of vocational planning. In all but two or three

. . . /

cases, there had been no progression from one level of continuing education to another; no sequence of related courses; no concentration in one field of interest.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, further education put off at 18 or 21 is much harder to obtain at 35 by a woman with a husband, three children and a home. Once an adult learner has enrolled, educational theory differs on her chances of success. Some education experts theorize that the mature student is a slower learner while another lauds the re-entry student as more motivated to achieve than younger students and more successful in leaving behind cultural restraints in regard to women's achievement.<sup>46</sup> More likely, the truth for individual women students lies somewhere in between.

Regardless of her ability to learn, the returning student has numerous family and institutional obstacles to hinder her progress. Jean M. Skelhorne undertook a study<sup>47</sup> of the facilities and services provided by the University of Toronto for mature, full-time undergraduate women and outlines some of the barriers to completion of studies; a summary is provided below of those barriers especially related to the re-entry woman:<sup>48</sup>

1. Lack of facilities and services for adults - includes lack of peer group networks, inadequate academic advising (short and long-term planning), inadequate counselling services;
2. Rigidity of institution - i.e., scheduling of courses, essay deadlines;
3. Pedagogical approach: lack of understanding of adult student by some professors and other staff members; indifference to adults' life-work experience;

4. Domestic uncertainties and responsibilities; eg., emergencies due to family illness, preparation of annual festive events, attendance at school functions that involve her children);
5. Lack of family support (spouse is critical since social life almost ceases);
6. Guilt (Am I letting my children down? Should all this tuition money be spent on me?);
7. Stress and fatigue - dual roles - mother/wife and full-time student;
8. Study area problems - a mother may not have suitable study facilities where she can have undisturbed quiet; the institution may not provide such facilities in adequate numbers.

More than any other institutional policy, the traditional disdain shown for part-time studies by most community colleges and universities presents an obstacle to the mature student. Institutions have tended to regard part-time studies as somehow inferior and frequently impose, in the name of academic excellence, rigid rules regarding the length of time a student is permitted to complete a course. The choice of degrees that can be followed on a part-time basis is limited, often excluding professional courses, and graduate level students are frequently required to attend full time. These rules may particularly hamper females because, as we see from 1977-78 statistics, the majority of part-time undergraduate students (57.9 per cent) were women as compared to 44.6 per cent of women in full-time undergraduate courses; for the same year, 34.7 per cent of part-time graduate students were women, compared to 33.0 per cent of full-time graduate students being women.<sup>49</sup>



Money can also be a problem. A mother may be conditioned to feel uneasy about spending money on her own post-secondary education when her teenage children will soon be thinking about the same. For some, there is little question that outside financial support will be needed; here again institutional inflexibility rears its head, as Canada Student Loans are not available to part-time students and the definition of a part-time student varies from one institution to another. As Vickers and Adams explain in their study of the status of women in universities,

In some instances, rules governing undergraduate status are dictated by government policy, in others by university policy. In some universities a student attending two courses in the winter term and two in the summer is defined by the university as a part-time student, despite the fact that a student enrolled in four courses during the winter terms is defined as full-time and can take advantage of grants, loans and scholarships generally provided for full-time students only.<sup>50</sup>

Community colleges and universities could respond better to the needs of adult students if they introduced more flexibility into student admission standards. At present, many community colleges and universities have found a partial solution by offering mature student admission standards to those adults who lack the normal entrance requirements. Further, institutions could establish a system of equivalents which accept a wide range of evidence of the candidate's knowledge and ability, thus encouraging suitable students who are at present deterred by the long drawn-out preliminary process of supplementing educational

qualifications. Such equivalents could relate work/life experience to academic requirements or permit banking of community college credits toward a university credit. Greater use and recognition could be given to educational television and correspondence courses in order to help women and men fulfil entrance requirement courses at home.

No one would ask that the standards required of re-entry students be different from the standards normally expected, but this does not rule out greater flexibility for entrance; it is where a student finishes on a course that matters, not where she begins.

It is likely that the declining enrolments faced by community colleges and universities today will force these institutions to seek new sources of clientele and new methods to serve them. There is already some recognition that adult students cannot drop all family and job responsibilities to return to school full time; for instance, Woodsworth College in Toronto and Carleton University in Ottawa offer off-campus lectures in an attempt to cater to the work schedules of part-time students.

Atkinson College, an affiliate of York University in Toronto, is almost entirely devoted to part-time and mature students.

Some initiatives have been aimed specifically toward re-entry women students and offer a recognition of their special needs for counselling, information and moral support. For example, the Ban Righ Foundation for Continuing University Education at Queen's University works predominantly with mature women who are returning to university. The

Foundation offers programs on such topics as mid-career change, creative job hunting, philosophies of feminism and assertiveness training. Bursary assistance is also offered.

The community colleges are at the forefront of employment-related courses and counselling. Representative of these is the Employment Orientation for Women program offered by Douglas College in Vancouver. The course discusses family, money and time management, community resources, employment assessment, finding employment and holding a job. Related seminars include "You're Only Middle-Aged Once", "On Being Single Again", "Study for College" and "Lifestyle Options".

Pressure from outside organizations is being brought to bear on post-secondary institutions, particularly on universities. The Canadian Organization of Part-Time University Students (COPUS) has been set up to press for more options for part-time students. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), an umbrella organization of the Canadian academic community, has a Committee on the Status of Women which is preparing a model for use by all post-secondary institutions demonstrating needed changes for female students and staff.

### 3. PART-TIME WORK

The search for part-time work has become almost commonplace in the experience of Canadian married women. Almost 24% of married women who are in the paid labour force work part time.<sup>51</sup> Part-time work can fit in well with family demands and schedules and offers a woman a convenient way of supplementing the family income or of

pursuing her own vocational interests and keeping up her job skills without detracting too much from the performance of those home tasks still expected of her. Further, part-time work enables the re-entry woman to re-acquaint herself with the work world and make practical adjustments before seeking full-time employment. On the surface at least, part-time work provides the best of two worlds.

There were just over 1.2 million part-time workers in Canada in 1978, representing 12.1% of all those employed.<sup>52</sup> Almost three-quarters (865,000) of part-time workers are women and more than 63% of these are married women.<sup>53</sup>

While part-time employment may seem to present the best of the two worlds of paid employment and homemaking, there are many disadvantages which cannot be overlooked.

The prime areas of part-time employment are in the traditional low-paid women's occupational ghettoes, especially for re-entry aged women.

In a 1973 study on part-time work in Canada<sup>54</sup> Marianne Bossen surveyed public and private industry and found that part-time women workers were highly represented in office support occupations, food services, housekeeping, health services, as sales clerks and cashiers. Married women in offices were mainly in the 20-40 age group while middle-aged women were more often employed in stores and hospitals.

This finding is substantiated by the University of Calgary study, which stated:

For part-time employees the sales group ranks the highest proportion of employees (29.6%) and is especially frequent in the

. . . /



40 to 45 and the 55 to 60 age groups.  
Almost all part-time employees aged over  
60 were in service occupations.<sup>55</sup>

It could be argued that there are positive aspects to availability of part-time work in these occupational categories. Low educational attainment or lack of recent job experience is generally not a severe handicap to obtaining these jobs. For many re-entry women who lack work skills or education, their job opportunities would otherwise be non-existent.

Training opportunities are almost nil, however, with little chance of skills upgrading and advancement to a better paid position. Managers are often reluctant to offer long-term training to part-time workers, especially middle-aged or upper middle-aged workers. For example, office skills or bank service skills, when required on a part-time basis, are recruited from the available pool of part-time workers who obtained their skills in the years when they were full-time employees. Promotion to supervisory ranks is rare, as management is considered to be a function requiring daily continuity to preserve consistency in decision-making and communication.

For the homemaker who has decided to use part-time work as a vehicle for eventual return to full-time employment, this may mean that she has devoted several years to part-time work without appreciably improving her work skills or her chances for promotion and therefore has not greatly expanded her choices or chances of finding rewarding full-time employment.

Further, she may have been unable to start building up security against retirement or sickness as most part-time jobs do not have pro-rated fringe benefits such as a pension plan, paid sickness leave or paid vacation.

Finally, although many women might like to work part time, such employment may not be easy to find since there are simply not enough part-time jobs to go around.

Government at all levels could do much to make greater and more imaginative use of regular part-time workers and to set an example in this regard to the private sector. A few departments within the federal public service have made special efforts to accommodate part-time workers, but more attention should be given to expanding the numbers and kinds of jobs which are available on a part-time basis and this should involve more than the simple multiplication of traditional part-time jobs.

Creative thinking will be necessary to redefine some fundamental premises of the work world. For example, why has part-time work traditionally been seen as second-class? And, of particular interest to re-entry women, why is a woman's part-time work experience viewed as a weak commitment to the work force rather than as a concerted effort, often against great odds, to keep skills up to date during those years when family responsibilities are the heaviest?

Re-thinking part-time work can provide solutions and options for every worker; for example, men may increasingly seek part-time employment so that they can take a greater share in home and parental duties. Part-time work would be of interest to older workers who wish to reduce

their workload, thus smoothing an abrupt change from full-time employment to retirement. Handicapped workers who could not work an eight-hour day would welcome a part-time work commitment.

#### 4. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO RE-ENTRANTS

Federal government programs of interest to re-entry women are presently sponsored almost entirely by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (formerly Manpower and Immigration). The Commission's programs can be organized into three general categories - job placement, occupational training and job creation.

##### a) Job Placement

##### i. Canada Employment Centres

Steps have been taken by the Commission to assist women in obtaining career information and placement. Information packages directed specifically to female clientele have been produced as well as a film entitled "Creative Job Search Techniques for Women", which is available through any Employment Centre. This film is designed to help women who have been out of the work force while raising families to translate their experience as a homemaker, as a part-time worker or as a volunteer into desirable job skills and present these skills in an effective resumé.

In the Ontario region, Canada Employment Centres offer a short-term program of special interest to re-entry women. Career II is a group information-sharing program providing labour market information, confidence-building

and job search techniques. It also discusses methods of coping with meal planning, child care and personal time. There is no charge for this program, which lasts approximately 16 hours over a period of from two days to eight weeks.

Finally, during the period 1974-76 all Manpower counsellors underwent a training program to sensitize them to the employment needs of women; the preparation of a second program is currently underway.

In spite of official policies and initiatives, complaints from individuals continue to come to the notice of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, provincial status of women councils, and women's bureaux. It is evident that traditional attitudes about women's ability or desire to do certain jobs change slowly. Clients complain that counsellors are indifferent or unsympathetic to their problems or that counsellors automatically channel them into clerical jobs. At present a client who feels she or he has been unjustly treated has no recourse. The setting up of a client appeal system would help clients to get satisfactory service and would serve as useful feedback to the Commission's policy analysts.

#### ii. Outreach Program

Through its Outreach Program, the Employment and Immigration Commission provides grants to employment counselling groups aimed at helping the chronically unemployed, those who suffer mental and physical handicaps, native peoples and those who live in isolated areas. This program has recently come under heavy criticism because the Commission has decided that women should no longer be included as a target group needing special employment counselling. This



policy change has meant cancellation for numerous women's employment and counselling centres which had been set up in most major cities across Canada.

Although these women's counselling centres may be cancelled, it may be worthwhile to briefly outline the services they typically provided. Workshops were designed to help clients realistically assess their marketable skills and prepare for the job-hunting process. Resumé writing and skills assessment workshops, for example, assisted the homemaker in analyzing the work she performed over the years, and presenting it in a resumé in saleable terms. Discussion would cover the impact of re-entry on the family, household management, setting goals, education and re-training. Job-hunting techniques would be demonstrated, sometimes using role-playing to provide clients with a dress rehearsal before facing a personnel officer. Emphasis was typically on group counselling and workshops as most counsellors agree that group involvement helps an individual client to see that her problems are not unique or unsolvable. Services were offered free of charge.

There is no doubt that these support groups were filling the needs of thousands of Canadian women who are ill-prepared for the work force; counsellors speak uniformly of large classes and waiting lists. It is disturbing indeed that these women's counselling centres are being considered redundant, especially given the current shortcomings of the Canada Employment Centres vis-à-vis their women clients.

b) Occupational Training

i. Institutional Training

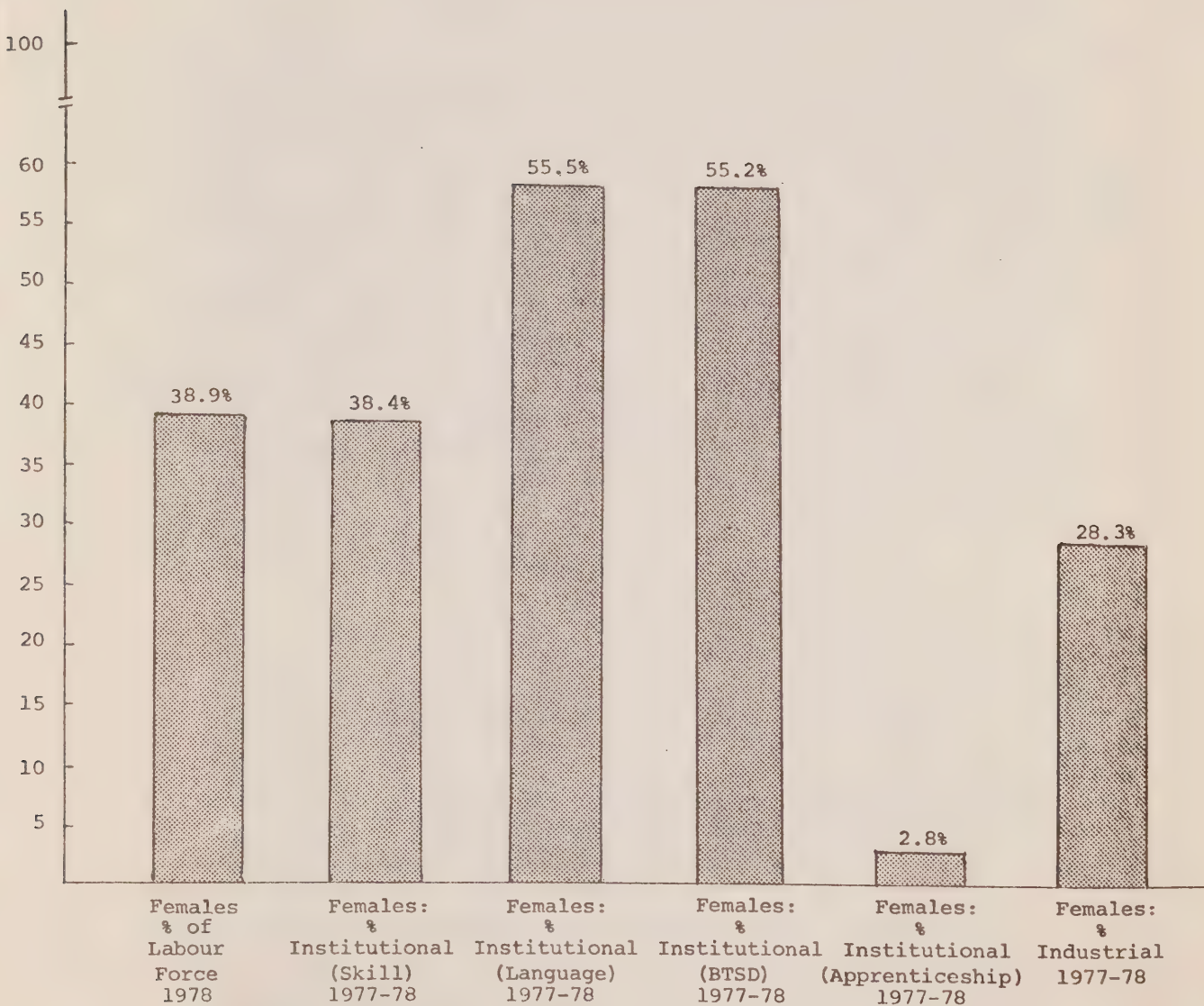
Since 1972, attachment to the labour force is no longer a criterion of eligibility for employment training programs,<sup>56</sup> so re-entry women can qualify for training and for the allowances which are available.

Current weekly rates provide \$60 for a person maintaining a household but having no dependents, and a range of from \$80 to those maintaining a household with one dependent to \$125 to those with a household and four or more dependents. If a trainee is living with an employed parent or spouse the allowance is \$10 a week. Most married re-entry women would fall into the latter category. The maximum length an individual can take a course is 52 weeks of academic upgrading and 52 weeks of skills training, although these can be combined back-to-back for a total of two years of training. Institutional training involves the following four components:

1. Basic training for skill development - basic academic upgrading;
2. Occupational skill training;
3. Language training - basic English and French training, primarily for recent immigrants;
4. Apprenticeship training - combines periodic classroom instruction with a formal apprenticeship program.

Figure 2 shows women's participation in Canada Employment Training Programs<sup>57</sup> as compared to their share of the labour force and shows that women are over-represented in language and Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD) courses and under-represented in apprenticeship training.

**FIGURE 2**  
**FEMALES' PARTICIPATION**  
**IN CANADA EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS**  
**AS COMPARED WITH THEIR SHARE OF THE LABOUR FORCE**  
**1977-78 (CANADA)**



Source: Program Analysis Division, Training Branch, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

Only 2.8 per cent of apprenticeship trainees are women, and of these only 9.1 per cent are 35 years of age or over. Clearly governments and industry are not seriously considering women, especially mature women, for trades training. Further, 79.9 per cent of female apprenticeship trainees are trained in service occupations.

Women are now represented in skill development in proportion to their participation in the labour force, which shows that the concern of earlier years of under-representation of women in skill training is no longer valid. Although this is initially encouraging, a closer look shows that female trainees are receiving training in traditional women's occupations. Almost 58.8 per cent of all female trainees were being trained for clerical positions. The two next highest categories are health, arts and sport at 9.2 per cent and service at 12.3 per cent.

There is evidence that Employment and Immigration is channelling women applicants into these occupations, as only 25.1 per cent named their previous occupation as clerical.

Twenty-eight per cent of female skill trainees were 35 years of age and over.

The Quebec study of re-entry women is especially relevant to a discussion of Employment Training programs, as the sample was drawn from women who had taken a Manpower occupational course over the years 1971 to 1976. Within this group, 43.4 per cent had taken office skills programs, 12.4 per cent had taken professional or technical training (eg., nursing refresher course), 15 per cent blue collar



(eg., seamstress course) and 12 per cent service industry (eg., waitress course).<sup>58</sup>

The Commission has declared that it will set targets and compel Canada Employment Centres to place women in training courses where they are now under-represented. It should also attempt to ensure a more equitable representation by age.

An analysis<sup>59</sup> of graduates of Manpower institutional training programs shows that of the 1976 graduates who responded to the survey, those from clerical skills courses had one of the poorest employment rates. Only 58 per cent of clerical graduates found employment as compared to the overall employment rate of almost 65 per cent for all occupational courses; the highest employment rate was from the farming sector. This finding is somewhat puzzling, given that farming is a declining occupation and clerical is expanding. It appears that the traditional argument for giving women clerical training, that this is where they can most easily find employment, may not be valid. More investigation is needed to determine why some skills categories have higher employment rates than others and to ensure that women are brought out of the low-paying female job ghettos.

An Ontario institutional training course is of interest in this regard. "Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations" is a full-time, eight-week course designed as an orientation to non-traditional jobs for women. The course contains modules on confidence-building, coping with the dual role of homemaker and worker, labour legislation, budgeting and financial management, assertiveness training, labour market information and job search tech-

niques. A significant part of the course consists of plant tours and actual "hands-on" exposure to non-traditional jobs at the workplace.

An analysis of 1977-78 female institutional trainees suggests that the mature re-entry woman has a limited chance of receiving training. Three-quarters of female trainees were 34 years of age or under; 79.8 per cent had no dependents; 74.5 per cent had eleven years of education or under; 65.2 per cent were unemployed.<sup>60</sup> The general picture then of those receiving Employment training is of unemployed young women with no dependents.

Clearly improvements in the Employment skills training program are needed and these must come from both federal and provincial governments who cooperate on manpower retraining through Manpower Needs Committees. It is within the mandate of these committees, particularly the provincial committee representatives, to determine policies which will aid re-entry women to obtain skills training. Efforts to assist women at home could include scheduling of courses during those hours when children are in school, scheduling of courses so that a trainee can resume studies should a family crisis force her to temporarily withdraw, non-sexist course content and materials, advertising of training courses where homemakers will see them (eg., supermarkets, laundromats).

#### ii. Industrial Training

The Commission also takes part in industrial training programs. Employers and employer associations may apply for assistance in developing a specific on-the-job training program.

A look at 1977-78 Employment statistics shows that female trainees are under-represented in industrial training programs as compared to their participation in the work force; 28.3 per cent of trainees are women. This may in part be due to women's low representation in industry, although no figures were available to show a breakdown of industrial trainee placements by industry. Twenty-five per cent of female industrial trainees were 35 years of age or over.

The Commission has stated its intention to set targets for the number of women in industrial training courses. It remains to be seen how effective these targets will be in assisting women workers in getting industrial skills training.

#### c) Job Creation

Women who have experienced considerable difficulty in finding a job may be eligible for short-term employment under the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission's job creation programs.

Canada Works, the Commission's major job creation program, is designed to use the expertise of local organizations to create short-term employment opportunities during periods of high unemployment. Preference is given to projects in high unemployment areas where private industry cannot provide jobs. As Canada Works was just started in 1977, only a preliminary analysis of its participants is available. This preliminary analysis of Phase I<sup>61</sup> (April 1977 - March 1978), however, indicates that only 27 per cent of the participants were women, and of these 76 per cent

were unemployed prior to participation in the program. Almost one-half (45 per cent) of the female participants were less than 25 years of age. As the emphasis of Canada Works is on generating temporary jobs for the already unemployed and not on drawing people into the labour market, it seems unlikely that it will serve the needs of re-entry women as well as its predecessor, the Local Initiatives Program (LIP).

There are indications that LIP was helpful in assisting women in re-entering the labour market. Analysis<sup>62</sup> shows that 41.2 per cent of LIP participants were women. Of these women, 55.4 per cent reported that they were unemployed and 24.1 per cent reported that they were "keeping house" prior to entry into the LIP program. One woman in five (21.1%) reported that she was the main support for the family. When asked about main source of income prior to participating in LIP, 32.3 per cent were drawing unemployment insurance, 34.6 per cent were supported by family earnings (these women were housewives, presumably), 6.2 per cent were on welfare. 45.3 per cent of female LIP participants were 25 to 44 years of age, 21.0 per cent were 45 years of age or older. These figures indicate that LIP was an effective tool in providing work for unemployed women, re-entry women, sole-support mothers and welfare mothers. Regrettably, LIP has recently been phased out.

The Local Employment Assistance Program (LEAP) is another Canada Employment and Immigration job creation program which may be of interest to re-entry women. It is designed for those people who would find it almost impossible to obtain employment even under normal labour market conditions. Included are those who suffer from physical and mental handicaps, who live in isolated areas, or who



have seemingly insurmountable social problems affecting their ability to obtain or hold jobs. Two projects funded in London, Ontario, are typical of the projects funded: Magic Needles, in which women on public assistance are trained in sewing and crafts and then employed; and Ideas Workshop, which trains women on public assistance in drapemaking. Ideas Workshop also runs a daycare centre which caters to its own employees' children as well as those of Magic Needles employees.

Analysis<sup>63</sup> of LEAP shows that 29.2 per cent of participants are women. Of these, 41.6 per cent reported that they were unemployed and looking for work prior to entry to a LEAP program; 18 per cent reported that they had been "keeping house". When asked about main source of income prior to LEAP, 8.8 per cent were drawing unemployment insurance, 29.0 per cent were on welfare, 24.1 per cent were supported by a family member. 24.7 per cent of female LEAP participants were 35 years of age or older.

## VI.

### TOWARDS A GREATER RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S CHANGING ECONOMIC ROLE

The widespread recognition of the social changes heralded by women's permanent entry into the labour market and the implications that these changes have for a wide range of public policies and practices has been - and still is - a very long time in coming.

Thus, with legislative measures and programs lagging behind the advance of women into the labour force - particularly married women with children - re-entry women have typically been left to solve their problems alone and individually. And yet in reviewing these problems one is struck by their magnitude and by their interrelationship: limitations on work opportunities and earnings; the frustration and guilt prevalent among working mothers who find themselves carrying the double burden of care of the home and attention to work; the low status accorded homemakers; a combination of ageism and sexism which results in the frequent underuse of skilled womanpower. Far from being the unusual circumstances of individual women who are re-entering and participating in the work force, these conditions are so endemic as to constitute social problems.

Suggestions for change have already been discussed in this paper. These include more counselling and information services geared to the needs of working women; supportive programs for adult students in the universities and colleges; greater recognition on the part of employers of skills learned through homemaking and volunteer experience.

While these measures would go a long way in assisting mature women to re-enter the work force, there are two funda-

mental premises which must be challenged: the desirability of the continuous work pattern and the traditional division of work within the home.

#### 1. CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL WORK PATTERNS

Only one pattern of work has traditionally been accepted in our society - the uninterrupted work pattern beginning at the end of schooling and ending with compulsory retirement. It is structured for the most part to fill eight hours a day, five to six days a week, and 48 to 52 weeks a year. Sometimes work is scheduled on shifts, occasionally it is seasonal, but the model demands that it be continuous.

This traditional and largely unquestioned work style has allowed little recognition for the typical two-phase working pattern of women, a pattern which includes an interruption from the labour market of several years for child-bearing and rearing. In fact, the rigid adherence to the continuous work pattern has contributed to the conventional but erroneous view of women as marginal workers or workers with a low commitment to the labour force.

There is pressure for change in traditional work patterns, however. As wages and the standard of living have risen, non-work activities such as education and leisure pursuits have become more important, thus bringing demands for greater flexibility in working life from men and women alike.

Flexibility in work arrangements can cover a range of patterns. Among these are part-day, part-week, part-month, and part-year employment; shared and split-level

jobs; flexible working hours; the 35-hour week; the ten-hour day, four-day week; and regular periods of time off for training and retraining.

## 2. SHARING HOUSEKEEPING AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The social view that a woman's first responsibility is to her home finds its full expression in the division of roles and responsibilities in the family household - a division in which the wife takes on the primary responsibility for household tasks and parenting. And yet when a wife and mother takes on a portion of the economic responsibility of the family by going back to paid employment, there is often little change in expectations, so she continues as full-time cook, cleaner, child attendant and amateur psychologist. Essentially, seeking paid employment means taking on a second job.

Many of the problems associated with the structure and conditions of women's employment are contingent upon the services they are expected to render at home. Job seniority and advancement may suffer as they interrupt employment or work part time to give more attention to the home and family. A woman's sick leave allowances may be used up as she stays at home to care for a sick family member. Given the heavy unshared burden of family responsibilities, it is not surprising that chronic fatigue is often a problem of working mothers. Also, with the conservative climate of opinion on women in the labour force, a working mother may bear the emotional strain of guilt or doubt, even if her wages are essential to the family or she is supporting her family alone.



Clearly it is time for a reassessment of women's economic role and their homemaking and parental duties. Working wives need more help with housework and parenting than they are currently receiving. Studies from many countries indicate that, by and large, a husband's minimal contribution to the work of the household remains unchanged when a wife works outside the home. A recent Canadian study<sup>64</sup> supports this statement and estimates that a working mother may add to her 38 to 40 hours per week of paid work a minimum of 21 more hours of housework, the hours of housework varying according to the number and ages of the children.

Of course it is neither possible nor desirable to legislate that husbands and children should increase their share of household chores or that fathers should take a more active role in child-raising. It is possible however to foster a climate of opinion which encourages sharing of family responsibilities and recognizes that child care, maternity pay and parental leave are not "women's issues" but are intrinsically bound to the well-being of the entire family and to society as a whole. Governments can take action in this regard through realistic and forward-looking programs which reflect new family lifestyles and work patterns. An example of one such program would be the expansion of child care services, specifically services to school-aged children. These could include arrangements for children who, because of sickness or other reasons, are not in school during a normal working day; after-school centres for children to go to if they routinely get home much earlier than their parents; vacation centres for the care of children during holidays not taken with the parents.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The measures and changes suggested in this study must not be dismissed as addressing "women's issues" but seen as steps towards features of work life which will benefit both men and women.

The goal of policy should be to afford both sexes the same practical opportunities of participating in both gainful employment and parenthood. To regard such arrangements and programs as "special" and for women only is to miss the meaning of the phenomenon of women's growing labour force participation and the fundamental challenge it poses.

To continue to make social policy as though "worker" is a masculine noun is to overlook and disregard the basic differences in women's working lives. Given the nature of their adult life cycle and the weight of traditional pressure to perform child-bearing and home-making roles, most women arrive late, as measured by male terms, in the labour market. To demand that women make up for those differences on their own time and at their own expense is to condemn them to second-class work force citizenship.

Legislators can, on the other hand, recognize the social changes implied by women's entry into the labour market and provide public policies and practices which reflect these implications. In applying such policies and practices equally, we might go farther toward the stated goals of equal employment opportunity and free choice in life roles for both men and women.



## VII.

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